

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. PLAN BACKGROUND

The Arlington Community is centered around the intersection of Magnolia Avenue and Van Buren Boulevard and is made up of the Arlington and Arlington South neighborhoods (see Figure 1). Arlington is a distinct community with roots going back to 1868. The first planning study that focused on Arlington was prepared by Owen Menard & Associates in 1977. This effort evolved during an eight month period and became the first *Arlington Community Plan*. When the General Plan was updated in 1994, the goals and policies of the 1977 Arlington Community Plan were incorporated into the General Plan. This document is an update to and replacement for the 1977 plan.

The first step toward creating a new community plan occurred in October 1992 when the City Council appointed a community committee for the purpose of meeting and discussing Arlington's land use, urban design and redevelopment issues. Under the leadership of Councilman Alex Clifford, the initial goal of the Arlington Community Committee was to identify and formulate alternative solutions to significant community issues. The Committee's work led to the Arlington Community Study which addressed issues related to the Magnolia/Van Buren corridors, Indiana Avenue, and the many large, underutilized lots in Arlington. As this study was going through the approval process, it was the consensus of the Committee that it should be modified as necessary to allow it to become Arlington's new Community Plan. The City Council subsequently endorsed this idea and directed the staff to make the necessary changes to the Arlington Community Study. This document is the evolutionary result of the City Council's directive.

This plan addresses the following:

Community-Wide Goals, Objectives and Policies: The basic foundation of the Arlington Community Plan is the goals, objectives, and policies applicable to the entire Arlington community. These guidelines define the vision for the overall community and provide a foundation for all future decision-making. By applying this plan to development related decisions, it should be possible to provide for rehabilitation, change, and growth in character with the essence of the Arlington community.

Magnolia Ave/Van Buren Blvd Corridor Development/Revitalization Guidelines: The Magnolia Avenue corridor runs between Harrison and Jackson Streets. Development is characterized by a mixture of small commercial and office uses. The area includes the historic downtown core, what is referred to in this report as "Arlington Village" and the Riverside General Hospital property. It is considered one of the most significant areas within the community in need of attention and

FIGURE 1
COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

direction. The Van Buren Boulevard corridor extends between California Avenue and the Riverside 91 Freeway and includes the Arlington Park “focal point.” This section of Van Buren Boulevard is a heavily traveled major arterial that is scheduled for widening from four to five lanes in 1998-99. This part of the plan examines the Van Buren widening and makes recommendations to minimize its impacts on the cohesiveness of the community. It also reviews the planned width of Magnolia Avenue and makes recommendations to maintain a street width and character appropriate to the scale and character of Arlington. In addition, it includes private property design guidelines to preserve and restore Arlington’s essential character. To establish a business foundation for Arlington’s commercial revitalization, it includes an analysis of business conditions and establishes an economic revitalization strategy to restore the viability of Arlington’s commercial district.

Economic Considerations: Complimenting the Magnolia/Van Buren corridor part of the plan is an examination of Arlington’s economic strengths, weaknesses, and potential.

Indiana Avenue Corridor Development Guidelines: This area includes the north side of Indiana Avenue from Van Buren Boulevard to Harrison Street and the north and south sides of Indiana Avenue from Van Buren Boulevard to Gibson Street. Developed properties consist primarily of older single family dwellings on small lots. About half the properties are vacant, including some relatively large parcels on the north and south sides of the street west of Van Buren Boulevard. Many parcels are too small and shallow to be developed with industrial uses as envisioned in the General Plan. The area is also subject to high noise levels from the Riverside Freeway and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The part of the plan includes an analysis of these issues and suggests land development standards suited to the unique property configurations of the Indiana Avenue Corridor.

Large Residential Lot Development Guidelines: This part of the plan addresses several neighborhoods located south of Magnolia Avenue, east and west of Van Buren Boulevard. These areas are occupied primarily by older residences that once supported a combination of agricultural and residential uses. Over time, the agricultural aspect of these properties has diminished, leaving houses situated on oversized lots. The extra land around these houses can be a problem, in terms of weed control and accumulations of abandoned and stored materials. It is also seen by many as an underdeveloped area that should be further subdivided into additional residential lots. This section of the plan analyzes these large lot areas and offers several alternative approaches to their further development.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PLAN

Arlington faces many challenges, both from the changes that have occurred in the past and from changes that will occur in the future. It is the purpose of this plan to accomplish the following with regard to Arlington’s future:

- ***Establish a vision and policy framework*** for development and redevelopment decisions with an emphasis on Arlington’s historic roots.
- ***Develop viable solutions*** for identified issues.

- ***Prevent the homogenization*** that can occur through incremental uncoordinated design and development decisions.
- ***Serve as a catalyst*** for projects that strengthen Arlington’s identity as a unique and distinct community.
- ***Establish an action strategy*** for accomplishing the recommendations of this plan.

3. TECHNICAL APPENDICES

In the course of preparing this plan, detailed work was done such topics as existing conditions and issues, economics, character defining elements, and the like. To keep the length and complexity of this plan to a reasonable level, this more detailed information has been assembled into a separate document entitled “ARLINGTON COMMUNITY PLAN TECHNICAL APPENDICES.”

4. A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF ARLINGTON’S HISTORY

To best understand the Arlington of today, it is helpful to understand its historic roots. Like many contemporary California communities, Arlington’s beginnings can be traced to speculators looking to profit from the California land boom of the late 19th Century. The seed that eventually grew into the community of Arlington was planted in 1868 when Benjamin Hartshorn, purchased 1,860 acres of government land about a mile south of the site what would later become Riverside. Known as the “Hartshorn Tract,” this land purchase was anchored on the north by an east-west government survey line that is now the location of Arlington Avenue. From there it extended southwesterly toward Corona.

In 1874, Hartshorn sold this land to another speculator, W.T. Sayward, who resold half of this acreage to Samuel Cary Evans. Sayward and Evans further partnered with a mining syndicate having interests in land around the Home Gardens area to expand and strengthen their land holdings. These speculators knew, however, that their new purchase would be of little development value without water and so they looked to the new colony of Riverside to the north as a possible source. They secured this source in a partnership with Colony businessman James Felton with whom they formed the Riverside Land and Irrigating Company.

With water rights secured, the RL&I set about the task of creating a community. Among the first tasks was to draw a map and give the community a name. Some favored simply extending the name “Riverside” to the area. Others wanted a unique name, however, and on the 1876 RL&I map, the planned town center, at what is now Van Buren Boulevard and Magnolia Avenue, was penned with the name “Sayward.” When this land was further subdivided in 1881, “Sayward” was dropped and “Village of Arlington” appeared in its place.

Through most of its history, Arlington has been identified as centering on the intersection of Magnolia Avenue and Van Buren Boulevard. This was not always true, however. The earliest development occurred more toward Arlington and Magnolia Avenues, and Arlington’s initial identity as a place, tended to center around that location. An important landmark that provides a link to these early days is the 1880 Magnolia United Presbyterian (formerly Arlington Presbyterian) Church located on the south side of Magnolia Avenue, just west of Arlington Avenue. As the Magnolia/Van Buren townsite began to develop, however, references to “Arlington” began to shift toward the

Village of Arlington townsite. When the Village of Arlington got its own post office, in 1881, the sense of Arlington as a settlement focused on the Magnolia/Van Buren intersection took on a stronger identity than the Magnolia/Arlington location. As the years passed, the Arlington Village townsite obtained its own library, fire station, park, and Chamber of Commerce branch. Despite all these trappings of cityhood, however, Arlington was never a separate city, and upon Riverside's incorporation in 1883, Arlington became a part of Riverside's 52 square miles.

Arlington's growth as a community occurred primarily in the early part of the 20th century. This is shown clearly in successive maps prepared by the Sanborn Insurance Map Company. Since before the turn of the Century, the Sanborn Insurance Map Company has produced detailed maps of urbanized areas, showing building footprints, occupancies, and construction types. A review of Sanborn maps from the 1900's, 1930's, and 1950's show that most of the substantial commercial buildings that exist in Arlington today date from the World War I era and after. Prior to that, the majority of central Arlington consisted of residences, vacant land and less substantial wood frame commercial buildings. Arlington's heyday was the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. By the 1950's automobile oriented commercial centers began to develop on the fringes of Arlington and elsewhere in the City. Businesses that catered to the daily needs of people, such as clothing stores, markets, dry goods, etc., began to disappear, as shoppers took their business to outlying shopping centers offering convenient parking and multiple opportunities for comparison shopping. Today, Arlington consists largely of specialty businesses having little relationship with each other. Because of this lack of cohesion, persons visiting Arlington tend to go to one business and then leave the area. Strolling and shopping from one store to another has all but disappeared. Yet, the essence of the charm that once made Arlington a vital commercial district remains, waiting to be reawakened with a facelift and a new economic strategy.